

DU BARTAS, PETRARCH, AND THE POETRY OF DEISM

by John Arthos

Following the Pléiade in the admiration of antiquity and in exploring the resources of the vernacular, Du Bartas also took up the epic. Ronsard's *La Franciade*, never completed, had followed the fashion of imitating the *Aeneid*, glorifying France in the career of a mythical hero. But Du Bartas chose another subject, a natural history of the world. Maurice Scève in *Le Microcosme* had treated this matter in a limited way after the manner of Aratus and Manilius and the *Georgics*. More ambitiously, Du Bartas would in effect be elevating didactic poetry of this character into epic proportions. In presenting the history by expanding the *Genesis* story of the Creation, he had the further precedent of the hexaemeral literature of the sixth and later centuries that recent printings had brought to view again.¹ These writings—half georgic, half homily—had elaborated upon the Mosaic account partly by illustrations from ancient naturalists, although rather moderately in comparison with what Du Bartas was to do. He aimed for an encyclopedic effect and drew upon a host of ancient and modern scientific writers in order to represent the vast variety of things and the infinite bounty of the Creator. By its comprehensiveness his poem would achieve epic magnificence.

Du Bartas did not have a national hero at the center of the action, nor a great religious figure. One might deny that his poem presents an action at all, however much it keeps bringing forward the original cause of things; yet of course in the continuous praising of God Du Bartas meant to obtain for his poem the dignity of epic poetry. Throughout Europe he was thought to have succeeded splendidly, although it would have been wiser to regard his long writings more as hymns. Even *La Seconde Sepmaine*—poems on the great figures of the Old Testament—does not develop the interest of narrative. Du Bartas has neither the grasp of character, nor narrative power, nor a sufficiently sure grasp of poetic form. He is skilled with epithets and sentences, on occasion he is a master of verse paragraphs, but he does not have the boldness of conception that is needed to sustain the most comprehensive concerns. In reading the conclusion of *Paradise Lost* we acknowledge the sweep and force of meaning of all that has gone before, but the

ending effect of Du Bartas's poems is not greatly different from the satisfaction we take in the completion of a catalogue.

From the beginning Du Bartas not only took to an elevated style, he impressed upon his words the character of the piety his poetry would always celebrate. In unfolding its matter *La Sepmaine* would show the magnificence of God and would demand our reverence. Professor Reichenberger has pointed to those places where Du Bartas, like Ronsard and Du Bellay, paid respect to the ancient conception of the inspired poet, showing how, on the surface at least, they all drew on the reasoning which the Florentine Platonists had brought to the support of the idea.² Du Bartas, illuminating Scripture, had most reason to entertain the thought that in practice he would achieve what the theory claimed took place. But however he viewed his own results, a modern reader cannot credit him with bearing out the claims of the Platonic theory. He lacked the one indispensable belief that gives the theory a certain warrant, that sensual effects bear within them manifestations of the spiritual. In his language, in his verse, in his schematizing, there is neither sensuality nor spirituality; there is description, definition, assertion, and argument, and the poet—whether thought of as scribe or as vessel of the Muses or of the Holy Ghost—arranges his words without informing them with anything but the energy and fire of a man who identifies the analysis of a problem with its solution. With respect to his overriding interest, having analyzed and classified the character of the Creation, he is persuaded his words will not only bear witness to the Spirit at work in it, they themselves will express that Spirit. He would have his readers believe that description and classification in the light of an idea of the interlocking unity of all things is the sufficient proof of inspiration, of revelation, the Muse being *Uranie* herself. And yet, although he credited all to God, it appears that what he learned, he learned from books. He has not had a vision, and, on the other hand, neither the passion of the scientist nor the fire of doubt led him (as they had Lucretius, and as they were to lead Milton) into a feeling representation of the tension in the relationships of man and Nature. And however much, as a Protestant, he profited from worship, in his poetry his God turns out to be no awful, refulgent power, "absolute sole Lord of life and death," but hardly other than that strange activity we might learn of from digesting handbooks. He risked what supreme ambition always does, and in poetry this failure is commonly characterized as frigidity.

Two grand conceptions dominated Du Bartas's reasoning. One of these was the traditional idea that the world took form when the elements that made up chaos were harmonized. The other conception was related to this, identifying the principle that effected this harmony as a power directing the universe and all things in it to a divine end. So it was also in the little world of man, in his body and in his works. Accordingly the poet, knowing his

work to be creation in just such a sense as God's, judges the same power to be at work in ordering his language, achieving through words a representation of the order informing reality. Poetry manifests the authority and significance of God's own work.

Unquestioningly to Du Bartas, but strangely also to later times, this order and this principle were manifest in the material qualities of things and in the relationships between these material qualities rather than in relationships between forms, and the order of God's making and of the poet's achievement was witnessed more in surface and mass and dimension than in movement, or in what one might take to be a living presence. One might conclude that it was the solidity of God's work that manifested His excellence; and poetry, in representing this work, properly likens it to the works of painters, enamelers, tapestry weavers, engineers, and architects. God was an artist, working in matter. The matter itself was His making. Poetry accordingly would elaborate upon the concrete. In this conception there was, whether nascently or submerged, an implication of a single life in the works of nature and of art, but more often than not we are likely to read such notions into Du Bartas's words when they are not certainly there. With other philosophic and doctrinal poets, ideas of a continuing bond between God and the Creation are centrally important, as for example we find it indicated in Milton's figure of the Bird of God brooding upon the Abyss. For many the emphasis concentrates on the spiritual or living presence meshing the microcosm and the macrocosm, the continuous treaty-making of soul and body, but with Du Bartas we hardly get the sense of this. He is fascinated with the analogy between great and little worlds, he continually writes of the relationship between the elements of all things and the humors of the body, but either he does not intend to, or his imagination is not able to re-create the sense of a mingled life that explains the doctrine of sympathy the alchemists and magicians depend on and that so many poems exploit. The idea is here, but Du Bartas does not conceive of it in its activity as endowing matter with form and life. Instead he reduces everything to the physical causes of physical effects. The motive power is more body than motion; as far as possible all is to be comprehended as material and concrete.

Or ce docte Imager pour son œuvre animer,
Ne prit de l'air, du feu, de terre, de la mer,
Une cinquième essence, ains poussant son haleine
Il fit comme couler de la vive fontaine
De sa divinité quelque petit ruisseau
Dans les sacrez conduits de ce fresle vaisseau.
Non qu'il se demembrast, non qu'il fist un partage
De sa triple-une essence avec son propre ouvrage,
Ains, sans perdre le sien, d'un souffle il le rendit
Riche de ses vertus, et puissant respandit

Si bien ses rais sur luy qu'encor mesme il luy reste
 Quelque lustre apparent de la clarté celeste.
 Ainsi l'esprit d'Adam proceda de l'Esprit,
 Pere de l'univers, sans toutefois qu'il prist
 La moindre portion de sa simple substance,
 Comme le fils reçoit essence de l'essence
 De son pere mortel, ou comme au renouveau
 De l'humide sarment naist un bourgeon nouveau.
 Bref, ce n'estoit qu'un vent: or le vent, bien qu'il sorte
 Du creux de l'estomach, toutefois il n'emporte
 Rien de nostre substance, ains seulement retient
 Les pures qualitez de la part dont il vient.
 Inspiré par ce vent, ce vent je veux descrire:
 Celuy n'a point d'esprit qui son esprit n'admire,
 Celuy n'a point de sens qui nuit et jour ne sent
 Les effects merueilleux d'un soufle si puissant.
 Je sçay que commel'œil void tout fors que soy-mesme,
 Que nostre ame cognoist toutes choses de mesme,
 Fors que sa propre essence, et qu'elle ne peut pas
 Mesurer la grandeur de son propre compas.
 Mais commel'œil qui n'est offensé d'un caterre
 Se void aucunement dans l'onde ou dans le verre,
 Nostre ame tout ainsi se contemple à peu pres
 Dans le luisant miroir de ses effects sacrez.

(*Sixiesme Jour*, 709-742)³

There are many places, especially in the *Septiesme Jour*, where Du Bartas likens God to an artist or a craftsman. He runs through a number of the trades, and he even asserts that "ce grand Ouvrier" continues to live in His Work, but his understanding in fact does not entertain anything like the re-creation of a sense of God's immanence. His conviction to the contrary is the compelling one, that God remains apart from what He has created.

Le Peintre, qui, tirant un divers paysage,
 A mis en œuvre l'art, la nature, et l'usage,
 Et qui d'un las pinceau sur si docte pourtrait
 A pour s'eternizer donné le dernier traict,
 Oublie ses travaux, rit d'aise en son courage,
 Et tient tousjours ses yeux collez sur son ouvrage.

(*Septiesme Jour*, 1-6)

It would be improper to extend this observation to those places where Du Bartas writes of the Incarnation, but the conclusion is clear that Nature and God are separate for him.

It is probably his strong commitment to private worship in the Protestant manner that encourages Du Bartas to regard Nature and its works as things apart, apart from man as finally from God. At any rate, as a poet he adopts the perspective of God Himself on the seventh day, looking over the completed work. The poet does not sympathize with the Creation, he admires it.

Sans maistre et sans travail, en suçant le lait dous,
 Nous aprenions la langue entendue de tous;
 Et les sept ans passez, sur la poudre de verre
 Nous commençons tirer la rondeur de la terre,
 Partir, multiplier, et montant d'art en art,
 Nous parvenions bientôt au sommet du rempart,
 Où l'encyclopedie en signe de victoire
 Couronne ses mignons d'une éternelle gloire.

(*Babylone*, 243-250)

A poet more given to tactile and atmospheric effects might have made something very different of these analogies for the creation, most particularly in exploiting the sense of a single animating life and soul in the worker and the world. One might have thought that even a universe of which Encyclopedia was mistress would manifest a quickening spirit, but Du Bartas's idea of the radical estrangement of God from Nature, and thus the alienation of Man from Nature as he approaches God, led inevitably to a poem uncharitably called "une grosse compilation rimée."⁴

To us Du Bartas seems to have entered upon *un malheureux travers*, but as it turned out there were features of his writing that were to provide models for poets in several nations and over many decades. His name might have been forgotten in his manner of carrying forward practices the Pléiade had sanctioned, but by putting them to the uses he did, he was to contribute significantly to the formation of neo-classic styles in several languages. His very excesses in developing modes of classifying the works of the Creation and emphasizing concreteness were to provide the devices, and, in their systematization, the hints of a style in which later neo-classic poetry was to present a generalized view of human matter in accommodation with an equally generalized conception of the order of nature.

If Du Bartas did not attempt the ancient epic form, he everywhere aspired to an elevation of manner that in words and figures would bring the classic Latin models continually to mind. He outdoes Ronsard in his exploitation of classical allusion as well as of certain devices. *La Franciade* began:

Muse l'honneur des sommets de Parnasse
 Guide ma langue, et me chante la race
 Des Rois François yssus de Francion
 Enfant d'Hector, Troyen de nation. . . .

and Du Bartas commenced *La Sepmaine*:

Toy qui guides le cours du ciel porte-flambeaux,
 Qui, vray Neptune, tiens le moite frein des eaux,
 Qui fais trembler la terre, et de qui la parole
 Serre et lasche la bride aux postillons d'Æole. . . .

Paradoxically, in following the Pléiade's ways of adapting classic models to the vernacular, carrying classicism to excess, Du Bartas calls more attention

to the novelty of his exaggeration than to the conventions he is continuing.

It is important to recognize, in his poetry as in that of the Pléiade, the extensiveness of the use of the language and conventions of ancient poetry. Long ago W. P. Ker spoke of the dependence of all modern poetry on the ancient in establishing a poetic diction. He took Chaucer's use of the word *armipotente* as the key example.⁵ Chaucer had borrowed the word from Boccaccio who himself was taken with the ancient Latin manner of forming compounds on the model of Greek poets. This was one among several of the devices the poets of the Pléiade imitated as they married the style of ancient poetry to the vernacular. There were successes, but there were possibly more failures, even for Ronsard, inventing combinations that were to be no more lastingly assimilated than Chaucer's *armipotente*. A glance at Ronsard's *Hymnes* picks out *donne-blé*, *donne-vin*, *ronge-poumon*, *aime-vers*, *Cuisse-né*. But a single line of Du Bartas yields

Domte-orgueil, charme-soin, traine-peuple, emble-cœur.
(*Babylone*, 231)

And on a single base Du Bartas formed *Donne-ame*, *donne-blé*, *donne-clarté*, *donne-esprit*, *donne-estre*, *donne-froment*, *donne-gloire*, *donne-honneurs*, *donne-jour*, *donne-laict*, *donne-lauriers*, *donne-loix*, *donne-miel*, *donne-mort*, *donne-peur*, *donne-teint*, *donne victoire*, *donne-vin*.⁶

In the *Hymne de Santé* Du Bellay had taken up the ancient figure of flowers painted on the grass to extend it slightly:

Les fleurs & la peinture
De la jeune saison
Montrent de la Nature.⁷

Ronsard developed the figure somewhat more:

Et sur les bords tousjours l'herbe verdoye
Sans qu'on la fauche, et tousjours diaprez
De mille fleurs s'y peignent les prez.⁸

Du Bartas made, characteristically, almost everything that could be made of the image:

Comme Dieu fit du peintre en azurant les ondes,
Verdissant les beaux champs, dorant les voutes rondes,
Aux cailloux precieux donnant un teinct brillant,
Rayonnant les metaux, et les fleurs esmaillant:
Du sculpteur, en formant dans les troncs et feuillages
Des plantes tant de traicts, veines, filets, images:
Du fondeur, en moulant tant et tant de façons
De postes emplumez, d'animaux, de poissons.
(*La Magnificence*, 1059-1066)

In Du Bartas there is the notorious figure likening the foliage of a tree to a wig—the *perruque* (*Les Artifices*, 98). There was, of course, the ancient

example from the *Georgics*, *silvis honorem*, and elsewhere, but Sir Sidney Lee credited the modern adaptation to Ronsard:⁹

Et la forest par les vents dépressée
Egale aux champs sa perruque baissée.
(*Ode XXXII*)

But Du Bartas does not leave it at that, and with him the wig in winter becomes flocks of wool:

Mais soudain que l'hiver donne une froide bride
Aux fleuves desbordez, que la face il solide
Du baltique Neptun, quil vitre les guerres,
Et que de flocs de laine il orne les forets.
(*Les Artifices*, 141-144)

The likenesses in such practices are evident, and one may judge from the character of Du Bartas's entire undertaking how much he was being led not only by the example but by the doctrines of his predecessors. He had, himself, written of the need for elevating verse:

Les autres m' objectent l'affectation des mots nouveaux, & le trop frequent usage des Epithetes composez: le ne suis point de l'opinion, de ceux qui estiment que nostre langue soit (il y a desia vingt ans) parvenue au comble de sa perfection, ains au contraire ie croy qu'elle ne fait que sortir presque de son enfance. De sorte qu'on ne doit trouver mal-seant, qu'elle soit, suvant le conseil d'Horace, enrichie, ou par l'adoption de certains termes estrangers, ou par l'heureuse inuention des nouveaux.¹⁰

Ronsard had explained how these and other "inventions" would elevate a poet's verses,

les ornant et enrichissant de Figures, Schemes, Tropes, Metaphores, Phrases et periphrases eslongnées presque du tout, ou pour le moins separées de la prose triviale et vulgaire (car le style prosaïque est ennemi capital de l'eloquence poétique) et les illustrant de comparaisons bien adaptées et descriptions florides, c'est à dire enrichies de passements, broderies, tapisseries et entrelacements de fleurs poétiques, tant pour représenter la chose, que pour l'ornement et splendeur des vers . . .

Labourer, *vertere terram*, Filer, *tolerare vitam colo*, *tenuique Minerva*. Le pain, *Dona laboratae Cereris*. Le Vin, *Pocula Bacchi*. Telles semblables choses sont plus belles par circonlocutions, que par leurs propres noms: mais il en faut sagement user: car autrement tu rendrois ton ouvrage plus enflé et bouffi que plein de majesté . . . Tu dois davantage, Lecteur, illustrer ton œuvre de paroles recherchées et choisies, et d'arguments renforcez, tantost par fables, tantost par quelques vieilles histoires, pourveu qu'elles soient brièvement écrites et de peu de discours, l'enrichissant d'Epithetes significatifs et non oisifs, c'est à dire qui servent à la substance des vers, et par excellentes, et toutefois rares sentences.¹¹

It might be thought that Du Bartas had taken the advice of Ronsard literally:

Tu pratiqueras les artisans de tous mestiers, de *Marine*, *Vannerie*, *Fauconnerie*, et principalement ceux qui doyvent la perfection de leurs ouvrages aux fournaux, *Orfèvres*, *Fondeurs*, *Mareschaux*, *Minerailliers*, et de là tirer maintes belles et vives comparaisons avecques les noms propres des outils, pour enrichir ton œuvre et le rendre plus agreable:

car tout ainsi qu'on ne peut dire un corps humain beau, plaisant et accomply, s'il n'est composé de sang, venes, arteres et tendons, et sur tout d'une nayve couleur, ainsi la Poésie ne peut estre plaisante, vive ne parfaite sans belles inventions, descriptions, comparaisons, qui sont les ners et la vie du livre, qui veut forcer les siecles pour demourer de toute memoire victorieux du temps.¹²

The style of Du Bartas was distinguished from that of Ronsard, even when he was following his prescriptions, partly by his extravagance—extending the metaphors and multiplying them; partly in the domination of the figures over the syntax; and partly by a cast of thought that stressed the materiality of whatever he was naming. A figure of speech in which flowers are likened to flowers in painting develops into an image of a painter with a brush applying pigment. The snow-covered foliage of a tree turns into a wig, the curls flocks of wool. The four elements nourishing the world become a mother's breasts:

Car puis qu'il est ainsi que le sec element
Ses propres animaux ne nourrist seulement,
Ains, qui plus est, encore du laict de ses mammelles
Repaist du ciel flottant les escadres isnelles,
Et les ventres gloutons des troupeaux escaillez
Qui fendent les seillons des royaumes salez,
Tellement que la terre est ou mere ou nourrice
De ce qui court, qui vole, et qui nage, et qui glisse.

(*Second Jour*, 315-322)

However different a character the Pléiade gave to their imitations of antiquity, and however in continuing the practice of his predecessors Du Bartas drew attention to what was distinctive in his own style, the reader can discern at almost every point the phrasing of the ancients such poetry was building on. In this very passage we are reminded of the *aequore alto* and *natantes squamigerum pecudes* of Lucretius; of the *salsos fluctus* and the *scindimus aequor* of Virgil; of the *spumantia regna* of Valerius Flaccus. But the difference! The sea, the sky, the birds and fish take on the solidity of sculptures in relief, or, in even more substantial materializing, the air becomes mother's milk. Du Bartas leaves no doubt that he is aiming for effects in which the verse is all but saturated with allusions to the elegance of the classic poetic language even while he is himself sacrificing elegance in order to stress the concrete.

Yet if all is solid, all is not supposed to be static. He indicates a continuous interaction between all that he is writing of, though his intention is obviously not so much to capture the sense of movement in the life of nature as to characterize the relations among the elements and creatures, the relations between all things and the sum of things. It is in his interpretation of the working of the whole that we become acquainted with what is finally, I think, the most significant factor in establishing his style, and the emphasis that is to account more than anything else for the extent of his influence over later poets. The relationships among all these concrete things are not so much to

be likened to an organism as to a machine, "un système"—a "frame" as the translators call it. Du Bartas is a long way from anticipating the tone of the deists of the next centuries, but his imagination is discovering the terms they will require. His language initially is the traditional one in which the universe is spoken of as the body of God, or the temple of His spirit, but as he handles it the solidity of the images turns the body into a machine, the organism into a mechanism, the organic relationships into mechanical ones:

Dieu est l'ame, le nerf, la vie, l'efficace,
 Qui anime, qui meut, qui soustient ceste masse.
 Dieu est le grand ressort, qui fit de ce grand corps
 Jouer diversement tous les petits ressorts.

(*Septiesme Jour*, 143-146)

It is not always this language and this imagery, but even the personifications denominate a life of the same unfeeling movement:

Le flot, comme parent, fauorisoit la terre,
 L'air du feu son cousin soustenoit le parti;
 Mais tous deux unissant leur amour departi,
 Peuvent facilement apointir la querelle
 Qui sans doute eust defait la machine nouvelle.

(*Second Jour*, 290-294)

In extending the language and figures of thought and speech of the ancients into the imaginative projection of a universal mechanism, Du Bartas has found the controls for his inventiveness, for his extension of the conceits and mannerisms of the Pléiade, for his pleasure in extremes and extravagances, for the inventions which in the end are meant to make the essential point of the immense variety of God's creation, the innumerable products the poet will partly enumerate, the infinite characters he will in part define. His style will manifest God's inventiveness, the inventiveness of a God creating a mingling of many kinds and many species of objects in a beautifully colored, enameled, glistening mechanism. And again, the policy is Ronsard's, where he recommends the epithets that establish an object's place within an organized system:

Je te veux advertir de fuir les epithetes naturelz qu' ilz ne servent de rien à la sentence de ce que tu veux dire, comme *la riviere coulante*, *la verde ramée*, et infinis autres. Tes epithetes seront recherchez pour signifier, et non pour remplir ton carme, ou pour estre oyseux en ton vers: exemple, *Le ciel vouté encerne tout le monde*. J'ay dit *vouté*, et non *ardant*, *clair*, *ny haut*, *ny azuré*, d'autant qu'une voute est propre pour embrasser et encerner quelque chose. Tu pourras bien dire, *Le bateau va desur l'onde coulante*, pour ce que le cours de l'eau faict couler le bateau.¹³

Du Bartas in his grandiose poems is doing more than giving an account of the workings of God day by day, more than showing the assembly of the mechanism; he is explaining the principle of God's working, and the continued operation of that principle in the workings of nature. The principle is that of the union of contraries, the ancient idea that the combinings of

earth and water and air and fire make up the constitution of all things. What attracts and repels the elements in themselves and in their infinite divisions is a force, a principle, a cause. The initial impulsion is God's, but after the Creation it resides in the nature of things.

The union of contraries therefore becomes for Du Bartas not only what he will describe, but what he will employ the devices of language and verse to embody. In innumerable places what one might at first be disposed to regard as inflated speech—the extravagance, the superlatives, the luxuriance—are employed because Du Bartas conceives of them as called for by the very character of his problem, obliged to treat with the union of opposites, with the antithetical.

The first four lines of *La Sepmaine* introduce us to the terms of the system he will be telling of, and, characteristically enough, through the particularity of his mythologizing we also see that he is preserving the sense of the solidity of things:

Toy qui guides le cours du ciel porte-flambeaux,
Qui, vray Neptune, tiens le moite frein des eaux,
Qui fais trembler la terre, et de qui la parole
Serre et lasche la bride aux postillons d'Æole. . . .

A few lines later we are told of the time before the Creation, when the elements were separate and disjoint:

De tous jours le clair feu n'environne les airs,
Les airs d'éternité n'environnent les mers;
La terre de tout temps n'est ceinte de Neptune. . . .
(13-15)

But even before the Creation the paradox, that unity is a combination of parts, was inherent in the state of Deity itself—or at least Du Bartas felt that the language to express that state also demanded paradox:

Dieu tout en tout estoit, et tout estoit en Dieu,
Incompris, infini, immuable, impassible,
Tout-esprit, tout-lumière, immortel, invisible.
(26-28)

God Himself works through paradox:

Vrayment, cest univers est une docte eschole,
Où Dieu son propre honneur enseigne sans parole.
(135-136)

As the poem proceeds, relating the various combinations that arise in the course of the Creation, we see that in the midst of the exploitation of the manners and conventions of ancient epic poetry, paradox and antithesis become the key devices in accounting for the way in which things have come about and are. And so the Poet calls on the spirit of God, or on the soul of the universe, to raise his humble verse—"l'humble ton de mes vers" (*Second Jour*, 32)—to help him forward the grand argument—"un si grave

argument" (36)—and accordingly the key linguistic devices establish their hegemony:

Ceste longue largeur, ceste hauteur profonde,
Cest infiny finy, ce grand monde sans monde. . . .

(41-42)

Read without regard to Du Bartas's encompassing conception, much of this writing seems hardly more than words, extravagance upon extravagance, and when, in particular, paradoxes border upon the absurd, we might take much to be merely empty noise. Or we might on occasion credit the intention to a taste for the grotesque. But when we do take account of the zeal with which Du Bartas is informing every line with his sense of the authority of this principle in the Creation, we perceive the reason in the method.

To take a few examples that might serve for an apology: There is the striking, not to say strange, figure for snow-flakes:

Quelquefois il advient que la force du froid
Gele toute la nue, et c'est alors qu'on void
Tomber à grands flocons une celeste laine.

(*Second Jour*, 527-529)

The likenesses of flakes to flocks and of snow to wool is allowed, not only because all share the character of particles and of color, but because we may presume identity of composition, similar particles making up similar wholes.

Then, in the exuberant amplifications of an apostrophe—

Je te salue, o terre, o terre porte-grains,
Porte-or, porte-santé, port-habits, porte-humains,
Porte-fruits, porte-tours, alme, belle, immobile,
Patiente, diverse, odorante, fertile—

(*Troisiesme Jour*, 851-854)

we are not only being told of the various functions of the earth, we are seeing how a single nature supports and accommodates both moving and static things, both living and lifeless.

And so in what is to modern taste, despite all that current reductionist philosophy would warrant, most offensive, the likening of the human body to a machine, extending the analogy into particularities where we are more struck with the absurdity than with the justice of the comparison, Du Bartas evidently means to charm us with the recognition that just as the body is a machine, a machine is a body:

Car tout ainsi que l'arc son trait en l'air delasche,
Selon que plus ou moins sa corde est roide ou lasche,
Nos nerfs et nos tendons donnent diversement
A la machine humaine et force et mouvement.

(*Sixiesme Jour*, 631-634)

The same intent of harmonizing diverse and unlike characters accounts for his way of using personifications and the figures of pagan mythology. Gods and goddesses become elements, elements become persons, and the interchanges and identifications are meant at once to signify concreteness and the principle at work in things:

Dieu non content d'avoir infus en chaque espece
 Une engendrante force, il fit par sa sagesse
 Que sans nulle Venus des corps inanimes
 Mains parfaits animaux ça bas fussent formez . . .
 Ainsi l'aislé pyrauste en l'ardente fournaise
 S'engendre de Vulcan, s'esgayé sur la braise,
 Se perd perdant la flamme, et le viste element
 Qui goulou mange tout, seul luy sert d'aliment.
 (*Sixiesme Jour*, 1035-1038, 1043-1046)

If we do not sufficiently allow for the importance of the idea of the union of contraries in Du Bartas's thought, we might take these minglings of the names of the wonderful and beautiful creatures of the ancient world with humors and fluids and mire as figures of fancy and not of the imagination, as the willful extensions of thought at the expense of the way things appear to our senses. And perhaps ultimately this is what it all comes down to,¹⁴ but my present purpose is merely to point to the pervasiveness of the conception, to the power it held for Du Bartas, and to indicate how extensively it was at work in providing him with his style.

In the finally comprehensive paradox—

Dieu tout en tout estoit, et tout estoit en Dieu—
 (*Premier Jour*, 26)

we recognize the governing conception of *Les Sepmaines*, but we also perceive the stylistic device, the play on words, the inversion, the repetition of sounds, so much that calls attention to itself as style. There is the suggestion of hyperbole, too, and indeed, as Professor Reichenberger observed, antithesis is commonly in alliance with hyperbole in this poetry.¹⁵ This in part justifies our grouping him with the *concettisti* of the century, those who, as Luigi Russo put it, ignoring Petrarch the poet, honored him as the begetter of conceits.¹⁶ This perspective helps us to understand and to some extent to account for Du Bartas's popularity and his influence. On the face of it no one would seem to have been so unlike Petrarch, and yet, in putting to the use he did one of the key features of Petrarch's own style, he was in fact extending not merely a mannerism but a centrally important discovery of the Italian's.

Carducci, somewhat hyperbolically himself, but wisely for all that, commenting on Petrarch's Sonetto CXXXIX in his edition of the poems—

Pace non trovo e non ho da far guerra—

charged Petrarch with the responsibility for the rage for antitheses in Italian poetry. As he saw it, as a figure it was almost unknown to antiquity and it was taken up by Petrarch from "the scholastic and mystical Middle Ages." This remark can help us understand how poetry of such a profoundly different kind could provide a beginning for the developments in poetic style we see in Du Bartas.

Petrarch discovered in antithesis the means of capturing the tensions of consciousness, the stirrings and urgings of the passions and of fear and hope. The device, entertaining contradiction, embodied another tension, between logic and illogic, sense and nonsense, and it was therefore marvelously suited to express the interplay of the forces of the inner life, the jockeying of hope and the loss of hope, of desire and denial. Then, as Petrarch learned how to use it, antithesis served to relate this warring to his deepest thoughts and beliefs, to the understanding Augustine and Augustine's Platonism had given him.

Discovering such immense resources for the expression of feeling and meaning, Petrarch bequeathed to poetry after him a storehouse of techniques and emphases. He set the terms for different schools in the Petrarchan cult. By the sixteenth century two chief schools had been formed, their character determined by the different importance attached to the components of his style. Poets who continued to use Plato's reasoning in relating the passions to the knowledge of reality found the figural oppositions invaluable in relating carnal and religious love. We see this in Michelangelo and Spenser and Shakespeare and many others. As often as not, with these poets the substance outshines the manner, and in the greatest of them the Petrarchan conventions are at the heart of the successes. In the other remarkable development, *concettismo*, the form exerted its attractions at the expense of the matter, or else itself became the subject. Antithesis might almost have been invented to serve the extravagance that seems to be a cardinal quality of baroque art, and the Petrarchan antithesis once more became an instrument of the finest achievements.¹⁷

It seems ironic that a style developed to serve a fourteenth-century sensibility should be of such use to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century intellectuality. Devices so perfectly expressive of the inner life, of the consciousness itself, of demonic and divine presences within the soul, were transformed into the most brilliant characterizations of externality, of appearance, of the material world, even of the unfeeling. One of the most interesting illustrations of this development is Wyatt's transformation of Petrarch's ninety-first sonnet, and a glance at this can help us understand the range and limitations of Du Bartas's adaptations.

The long love that in my thought doth harbor
And in mine heart doth keep his residence,
Into my face presseth with bold pretense
And therein campeth, spreading his banner.

She that me learneth to love and suffer
 And wills that my trust and lust's negligence
 Be reined by reason, shame, and reverence,
 With his hardiness taketh displeasure.
 Wherewithall unto the heart's forest he fleeth,
 Leaving his enterprise with pain and cry,
 And there him hideth, and not appeareth:
 What may I do when my master feareth
 But in the field with him to live and die?
 For good is the life ending faithfully.

The violence and tenaciousness of the love is expressed in static, concrete pictures, images fully enough developed and so markedly alien to the matter they represent—an army with banners to signify the blush of the face—that the idea of onrushing feeling and the growth of excitement is with difficulty rescued from the stronger sense that the human is being transformed into the inhuman and grotesque. The outrageousness of the disparity in the likenesses strangely re-creates the suggestion of the pain inherent in desire, and so I think one may say ironically the figures preserve the sense of a relation between feeling and its expression by the very fact of their preposterousness—the heart being a forest in which a deer hides, a blush becoming a standard.

This way of extending the Petrarchan contrasts is illustrated in the engraving a certain M. van Lochem supplied as an emblem for a Petrarchan poem of Crispin de Passe, "La belle Charite"—Flowers are shown growing in the cheeks of a woman's face, a winged cupid is seated on her forehead, her breasts are globes on which we see the mapped outlines of the continents.¹⁸ Perhaps at the time the incongruous in all this was admired as a display of wit, as a comment on the absurdities of love, but there is also in the elaboration a certain lack of humor that itself belongs to the character of love, an absence of humor which delights in extravagance and deformation. Such conceits, I take it, are not empty, they are not inexpressive, although often enough they seem meant to be admired for themselves.

How meaningful the transformation of the conceits is one sees best in observing the original:

Amor, che nel pensier mio vive e regna,
 E'l suo seggio maggior nel mio cor tene,
 Talor armato nella fronte vene,
 Ivi sì loca ed ivi pon sua insegna.

Then the figure takes up again:

Onde Amor paventoso fugge al core,
 Lassando ogni sua impresa, e piange e trema;
 Ivi s'asconde, e non appar più fore.

In Petrarch the figures of the armed and fearful Love make more vivid the sense of the boldness and timidity of passion, and here, far from any sug-

gestion of the grotesque, there is the sense of the strength of love and the hurt in the shame of defeat. Then, in Wyatt, what has been in Petrarch the very sense of tremulousness and the evanescent is petrified, and the figures of a huntsman and a deer are allowed to dominate. In the magnificent language and pun, "the heart's forest," an equally powerful but more terrible passion is defined. In the end we are given the sense, not of the lover dying faithfully, "chi ben amando more," but of the defeat of one who looks on helplessly as the battle is fought and lost without him. Wyatt's lover has become the spectator of his own ill fortune, and Petrarch's never even conceived of disengagement.

The Petrarchan conceits, objectified so to speak, contribute to a variety of styles, and Wyatt, for example, is evidently able to achieve the effects of concentrated thought in this transformation that are not within the power of Du Bartas. On the other hand, Du Bartas has the advantage few others had of a single, all-comprehending conception, that all experience witnesses a certain constant relationship of spiritual and material worlds. Accordingly, if it is the antithesis that is the dominant, formative instructor of Du Bartas's imaginings, one might properly refer it to the key paradox, that God the spirit manifests Himself to man through His works:

Dieu, qui ne peut tomber es lourds sens des humains,
Se rend comme visible es œuvres de ses mains,
Fair toucher à nos doigts, flairer à nos narines.

(*Premier Jour*, 129-132)

But because, if I am right, Du Bartas has quite as much as Ronsard cut himself off from the ways of thought that can treat with the idea of an immanent spirit, he is left with not so much paradoxes as contradictions or absurd metaphors in all he says to reinforce his claims for God making Himself known through His works:

Il me plaist bien de voir ceste ronde machine,
Comme estant un miroir de la face Divine.

(*Premier Jour*, 119-120)

For a machine to be a mirror of a face is to conceive of gross solidity identically with the most delicate life. And for that to be God's face can only be to make God's face as concrete as those banners and forests in the face and heart of Wyatt's lover. The antithesis is Petrarch's, but the sense of the quickening of love and pain that defined the beauty of Petrarch's figures has been voided, and in its place we find not the sense of the working of life but the notation of the effects of the working.

We must believe that the faith is constant with Du Bartas—the machine is God's work and it is His very mirror and we do know Him by it as our senses tell us of it. The sensual world is the mechanical world is the divine

world. Antithesis or paradox or absurdity, it is the dominating scheme of thought, and accordingly of expression.

If this comes down to one poet's working with currents of thought developed in the imitation of Petrarch, and particularly from such a use of conceits and mannerisms as, for example, we find already in Ronsard,¹⁹ we might ask what it was that led Du Bartas to carry this to the extreme he did, and what was to account for the great influence he was to have over the diction of the poetry of succeeding generations.

I think the answer is only in part to be found in his temperament, which was, it would appear, quite sober, as alien to delicacy as to spirituality, a zeal that extends devices without a view to the larger effects. He did not show in his language anything that one may call a tactile sense. But I think this is a less important factor than his limited wit. Ronsard, Marot, and all those wonderful movements of the century which did so much to further the cult of clarity and of the secular, which found grace even in *badinage*, depended on intellectuality, and Du Bartas was no more capable of philosophy than he was of a secular view. He could only fasten his words more and more firmly to a certain simple faith.

By the virtue of this simplicity, this persistence, he arrived at a synthesis, however limited in understanding, that was nevertheless of the very character that was coming to life in deeper minds, that was in a while to dominate Europe in the form of Deism. He had at least the idea of the whole, of all nature as a single act. Instead of the infinite and the eternal, his orderly and stolid imagining helped him to contain and confine intimations of the mysterious, and although Descartes and Newton would be paying more heed to Platonism than it was in his nature to do, they would be giving grounds for a more persuasive idea of a universal machine than he could. And some of the poets to come, however limited they now seem to us, brought thought more usefully to bear in poems exploiting the idea of the union of contraries as the idea underlying all our understanding of life and of the universe.

Pope, J. B. Rousseau, and Metastasio all have at their disposal a language, a conception, and a tone to which Du Bartas's encyclopedic effort and his *concettismo* provided the key. And when we pick up almost any eighteenth-century poem—English, French, Italian—that has to do with the scheme of things, we see how much is owed to the Gascon original. The lines of descent are, of course, various,²⁰ but the progeny bear the same, surprisingly uniform stamp. So, looking around almost at random, we observe the familiar likeness:

Quand le Pilote, ou quand le Machiniste,
 Quand l'Horloger, ou l'Organiste
 Se servent d'un toucher, & de ressorts scavans,
 Font jouer le Métal, l'Air, les Eaux, & les Vents,
 Ne doit-on pas louer l'adresse singuliere,

Dont ils dirigent la matiere?
 Dans l'Ordre permanent que l'Univers fait voir,
 Dieu nous découvre en tout son Art son pouvoir.
 Lors qu'il dirige ainsi la Masse generale,
 Témoigner sa grandeur est sa Cause finale.
 Lui qui fit la machine, il sçait l'entretenir;
 C'est la créer toujours que de la maintenir.²¹

NOTES

1. See F. E. Robbins, *The Hexaemeral Literature, A Study of the Greek and Latin Commentaries on Genesis* (Chicago, 1912); and M. T. De Maisières, *Les Poèmes Inspirés du Début de la Genèse à l'Epoque de la Renaissance* (Louvain, 1931).

2. Kurt Reichenberger, *Du Bartas und sein Schöpfungsepos* (Munich, 1962), p. 26.

3. My citations of Du Bartas are from the *The Works*, edited by U. T. Holmes, Jr., J. C. Lyons, and R. W. Linker, 3 vols. (Chapel Hill, 1935-1940).

4. Sainte-Beuve, *Les Grands Ecrivains Français du XVIIe Siecle: Les Poètes*, edited by Maurice Allen (Paris, 1926), p. 241.

5. *Form and Style in Poetry*, ed. R. W. Chambers (London, 1912), p. 245.

6. In order to be able to attest to the use of hyphens in the originals, my citations here are from the editions of Du Bartas between 1582 and 1611. There is a complete list of these epithets in my *Studies in the Diction of Neo-Classic Poetry*, a dissertation at Harvard in 1937.

7. I cite from the *Œuvres Poétiques*, edited by Henri Chamard, 6 vols. (Paris, 1908-1931).

8. I cite from the *Œuvres Complètes*, edited by Hugues Vaganay, 7 vols. (Paris, 1923-1924).

9. *The French Renaissance in England* (London, 1912), p. 77.

10. *Œuvres* (Paris, 1611), sig. e iij^v.

11. *Au Lecteur Apprentif*, (*Œuvres*, VI, 532-535).

12. *Abbrégé de l'Art Poétique* (*Œuvres*, IV, 474).

13. *Ibid.*, IV, 478-479.

14. Giuseppe Toffanin, *L'Eredità del Rinascimento in Arcadia* (Bologna, 1923), p. 107.

15. *Du Bartas und sein Schöpfungsepos*, pp. 84-90.

16. "Il Petrarca e il 'Petrarchismo'," *Belfagor*, 9 (1954), 504.

17. I am much indebted here to Giulio Marzot, "Il Tramite del Petrarchismo dal Rinascimento al Barocco," in *Studi Petrarqueschi*, 6 (1956), 123-175; and to Aldo Scaglione, "Cinquecento Mannerism and the Uses of Petrarch," in *Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 5 (1969), 122-155.

18. Reproduced by Leonard Foster in *The Icy Fire, Five Studies in European Petrarchism* (Cambridge, 1969), note on p. xi.

19. Alex. L. Gordon, *Ronsard et la Rhétorique* (Geneva, 1970), pp. 186 and 220-221.

20. I have previously indicated something of the extent of Du Bartas's influence by way of Sylvester's translation in *The Language of Natural Description in Eighteenth-Century Poetry* (Ann Arbor, 1949).

21. L'Abbé C. C. Genest, *Principes de Philosophie, ou Preuves Naturelles de l'Existence de Dieu et de l'Immortalité de l'Ame* (Paris, 1716), Liv. IV, p. 263.